



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES

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Invasive Species...Should I care?

What is an invasive species? An invasive species is typically a non-native species that has a negative effect on our economy, environment and human health. This term is reserved for the most aggressive that grow and reproduce rapidly, causing major changes to the areas they become established in.

Should you care? It should be simple to explain, but often is not. In one aspect there's the direct impact to natural resource users: those who hunt, fish and recreate in Wisconsin. Have you ever tried to swim through Eurasian water milfoil? Tried wrestling your way through buckthorn while hunting or hiking? Invasive species can decrease your ability to enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding and other recreational pursuits.

But what if you never go out in Wisconsin's woods, prairies, rivers and lakes? Should YOU care if there are plants and animals taking over areas where native plants and animals should be fulfilling their specialized niche? Yes, and here are a few reasons why.

The longer we wait, the more expensive it will be to control invasive species. A 2000 study estimated that the economic cost of invasives to the U.S. was \$137 BILLION per year. Since then, a new invasive native to Asia, the emerald ash borer was discovered in Michigan. It probably arrived in shipping crates and is now killing native ash trees. Since 2002, tens of millions of dollars have been spent on detection and management in infested areas. Each new invasive species will cost millions and millions more of our taxpaying dollars. It's cheaper to prevent than to control invasive species.

Just ask the public utilities who battle zebra mussels, the most infamous ballast-water stowaway, at their intake pipes. Originally from Europe, it now flourishes in the Great Lakes. Mussel damage to communities, industries, public utilities, navigation, and boating in the Great Lakes was estimated to cost over \$5 billion from 1993-1999, and we're taking about just one invasive species.

You could be unintentionally contributing to the problem with your landscaping. Your yard could be a source of invasive plants. Seeds can be carried in many ways – by birds eating fruits and depositing seeds elsewhere, by water carrying seeds from your yard to sewers that lead to rivers or streams, or by car and shoe treads when you travel to parks. The best way to prevent the spread of invasive plants is not to plant them in the first place.

Invasive species are spreading on private and public lands and waters across the State of Wisconsin. You can help by becoming more aware of the problem and by learning what species are invasive. June is Invasive Species Awareness Month. During June, numerous field trips, workshops, presentations and work parties will be held throughout the state to teach citizens about invasive species and what they can do to stop the spread.

To learn about events taking place near you, or to register an event for others to join you, visit www.invasivespecies.wi.gov.

To receive a booklet entitled “Why Should I Care about Invasive Plants?” visit <http://www.mipn.org/education.html>. The booklet shows how invasive plants affect hunting, fishing, boating, gardening, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and other recreational activities in the Midwest. The booklet also expels myths regarding invasives and offers ways of how you can help.

This news release is sponsored by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species. The Wisconsin State Legislature created the Council, to which Governor Doyle appointed 13 members. The Council’s mission is to prevent and reduce the harmful impacts of invasive species on Wisconsin’s environment and economy, as well as human well-being.